Interview with Barrington King

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR BARRINGTON KING

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is April 18th, 1990. This is an interview with Ambassador Barrington King on behalf of The Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Barry and I are old friends. We served together in Greece back in the early 1970s. Barry, I wonder if you'd give me a little about your background. Where did you come from? Where did you get educated?

KING: I was educated in the University of Georgia. I have a background in education that is unlike, I suppose, almost anybody in the Foreign Service, in that is I have a degree in art. I do know one officer who has a degree in music.

Q: Yes, I've never heard of anybody with...we have a few biochemists, or something like that, but art?

KING: As far as I know. I've never met anyone else with an art degree in this business. After I got out of school I really never intended to make a career of art. I had a view of education that you learned the things that really interested you; and then careers are built on experience, I think. When I got out I wanted to go into the government, in the Foreign Service in particular. At the time, during the Eisenhower administration, there was a hiring freeze, so I took a temporary job with the Goodyear Tire Company. After about 18 months,

the government started hiring again. I did not go into the Foreign Service because in those days we had — I don't know why — the same physical standards as the Army; and I had had asthma as a child, and did not go into the Army during the Korean War for that reason. After making some inquiries I found out that, in fact, things were not as strict as advertised. I worked for the Social Security Administration in South Carolina for another year and a half while...

Q: This is what period?

KING: This was in 1954, '55, '56. During that time I pursued my application for the Foreign Service; took the written exam, the oral exam, the physical exam — there was no physical problem. In October of '56 I came to Washington to join the Foreign Service. I went through the usual junior officer training, and at that time — and this is something I don't think has happened much since then — the integration of the Foreign Service with the staff corps was still a thing that was going on, and there was an attempt to bring Foreign Service Officers who had entered through the exam, and who might want to be a political officer, an economic officer, into administrative work. I was sent to a course for disbursing officers. It's basically accounting. I was not very happy with that, but the good side of it was that most of the places where disbursing officers were needed were interesting posts. So I was assigned to Cairo, and arrived there in early April of 1957.

My wife and I had crossed on the USS Constitution. In those good old days you traveled first class, whether it was by air or by sea. The plan was for her to remain in Rome. The reason for that was, the British and French had just invaded Egypt the fall before and all of our dependents had been evacuated, and they were still out of Egypt. However, as we were crossing the ocean we read in the ship's newspaper that the U.S. Government had decided to let dependents go back to Egypt. So when we got to Rome, I applied for an Egyptian visa for my wife, and we arrived there together; and she was the first dependent to return to Egypt, since she had a head start on everybody else.

We stayed in Egypt for two years. I did work as a disbursing officer, and also worked on budget and fiscal matters, and I did other administrative tasks. But about halfway through my tour, I managed to talk my way into the political section for half of the day. So I ended up doing half administrative work and half political work. The work that I was doing in the political section was the daily press telegram, and this was a summary for Washington of what the Egyptian press was saying. I remember the first telegram that I ever wrote, it was on the first real break that occurred between the Soviet Union and Egypt — it was the day I started my job — over the question of the high dam in Aswan. We had pulled out of that project. Relations with the United States had been very good because of our attitude towards the British and French invasion. But they quickly soured, and the Russians moved in, and good relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union didn't last very long. There were ups and downs in it, but I saw it from the beginning. Working with the press I think is a good way to begin political reporting, because since you're on the inside of what's happening, and you are the one who is reporting on the public attitude, you can put the two together and make a good bit of sense of the situation.

It was an interesting tour, and it was an interesting time. Of course Nasser was in his height then, and we never did, in our time, see the British and French come back to Egypt. Relations were still broken until the time we left there. So it was a rather strange situation, because the British had been so prominent, and the Europeans had been so prominent in Egypt. But during the time we were there we saw the foreign communities begin to leave in large numbers, these were Greeks, Italians who had been there for many generations, the Jewish population, which was still quite large at that time. But during those two years almost all of these people left.

Q: Were they leaving because of pressure from the Egyptians, or from reading the writing on the wall?

KING: I think it was both. Laws were changed and regulations were changed, and just general practices of the government were changed at that time, which made life

considerably more difficult for the foreigners there who had lived in really a privileged position vis-a-vis the Egyptian population. When preference was given to the Egyptians, the Europeans didn't find that it was economically interesting to be in Egypt anymore. So, I think, probably more than anything they saw two, three, four years down the road, that it was not going to be feasible to live there.

Q: You were half in the political section. What was your sounding of the political section and the people reporting on Nasser at that point? How did we see it?

KING: I think probably most people felt that we could get along better with Nasser. This was not the official U.S. position in Washington. There were several complicating factors. Israel was one, of course, and that had a profound effect on policy in Washington, whereas it did not have such effect on people who were actually working in Egypt. Also, concerns about Egyptian ties with the Soviet Union were bound to have an effect in Washington; and, as with Israel, not only on the government, on public opinion in general. And you've got to remember at that time the Cold War was at its height, and any country that sided with the Soviet Union had a very difficult time as far as American policy was concerned. Another fact, of course, was that most of the people in the political section had carved out a career for themselves in the Arab world. Therefore many of them spoke the language, they understood the motivation of Egyptians, and tended to be more sympathetic with them that the average government official in Washington.

At the same time, I think, and not incorrectly, as was later proved, most people doing political work in Egypt thought if we were patient, the relationship between the Soviet Union and Egypt would break down, which it did. It took some years.

Q: You did not see this as a...not only you, but all of you there, did not see this as something that had any really lasting ties?

KING: We doubted it. We didn't really see how the Soviet Union would be able to exercise paramount influence on a country like Egypt over the long haul. They are too far away,

there are too many Egyptians, and the Egyptians have a long history of being very independent and proud. Nasser's moves were tactical. Had he stayed on, the relationship with the Soviet Union might have lasted a good bit longer. But, I think, most people who were working in the Embassy felt that we would come back, as we did.

Q: How did you feel about the adventures outside of Egypt with Nasser? I remember I was in Saudi Arabia on the Persian Gulf at the time and we had no doubt from our vantage point that the Egyptians were trying to establish Nasserism, whatever you might call that, all over the Arab world. And, of course, there was the Lebanese situation. How did you view it from where you were?

KING: We thought very similarly. I think that's what we regarded as the dangerous side of Egyptian politics. It was not Soviet influence in Egypt so much, as Egyptian influence in the Arab world. In some respects it's the same way we might look at Qadhafi in Libya today. He's a negative force. The big difference though, I think, is that Nasser was to be taken far more seriously than Qadhafi, both because of Egyptian resources, the size of the population, but just generally in his competence in carrying out its polices which Qadhafi has not shown much skill at.

Q: Were you there at the time when we put our troops into Lebanon?

KING: Yes, I was.

Q: Was that a period of some tension in Egypt?

KING: There was a great deal of tension. In fact, I can remember the day that it happened. Within hours of it happening the Egyptian army was sent to the Embassy, rather quietly, and a couple platoons of soldiers were marched down into a parking basement garage next door to the Embassy in case there should be mob attacks. Things were pretty unpleasant for a while there. I don't think in the end it had any profound effect on U.S.-Egyptian relations.

Q: I realize you were sort of in this very much a minor position in the Embassy at the time, particularly having half and half a job. Did you get any feel for Ambassador Raymond Hare who was Ambassador most of the time you were there, wasn't he?

KING: Yes, he was.

Q: How did he operate from at least your vantage point?

KING: Well, looking back on 32 years in this business, I think he's probably one of the most skillful operators that I have known, and I probably would appreciate him better today because I understand the business more than I did at that time. Ray Hare was an Arabist going far, far back. He had started teaching at Robert's College in Istanbul, I think in 1921. He was one of the first people to be sent by the State Department to study Arabic in Paris, it must have been in the early '30s. By the time I was there in '57 to '59, he was at the peak of his career. He was also at one time Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He was Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs. I think he did as well with Nasser as you could do, given the circumstances. He was a very careful, quiet operator, but he had a firm hand on the way the Embassy was run. And I think he had an excellent understanding, not only of the politics of the entire Arab region and how they related to Egypt, but also how to deal with Washington, which sometimes for an Ambassador is a more difficult problem than dealing with the country you're assigned to.

Q: Did you have the feeling, and in other interviews talked about how with Nasser and Dulles...this animosity was kind of personal...

KING: Yes.

Q: I mean, was this felt down where you were? Their saying, “No matter what happens, we've got this problem.”

KING: The problem was really felt in the Embassy, and I guess my feeling is that it really was personal on Dulles's part. On Nasser's part, it was useful, I think, to Nasser. To have this animosity between himself and Dulles for political reasons, and I think if it had suited his purposes, he could have changed very quickly. I'm not sure Dulles could have.

Q: This sort of hung over the whole operation.

KING: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

Q: Then to move on, you were in Cairo from '57 to '59, then you went to Dar es Salaam?

KING: First, I went to French language training, which doesn't seem particularly appropriate for an ex- British colony.

Q: Dar es Salaam, at that time, was Tanganyika?

KING: It was Tanganyika, and it was a UN trusteeship, administered by the British. I needed a language, and I had said that after my first tour, wanted to get language training. So they did do that, and I was supposed to go to Nice. We had a language school in Nice, in a villa that had been willed by an American lady to the State Department. However, I didn't end up there because the chairman of the Subcommittee on State Department Appropriations was a man named John Rooney, who at that time was well known to everybody in the business, and pretty much dictated policy on what the State Department did in the administrative area. And he found it amusing, or useful, or whatever, to make a speech on the floor of the House about this villa that we had in Nice, and why should we be spending money — of course, the villa was free — to train people there on the Mediterranean when they could be doing it somewhere else. The State Department, in its usual pusillanimous way, gave in immediately to the pressure, and we got rid of the villa. I entered the scene exactly at this moment, and this left us with a number of French

instructors, some of them quite good, and no place for them to work because when the State Department moved, it moved very quickly.

What they did was, they took the two instructors they thought to be the best, and they were excellent, to try to hold them until they could make a decision on how to continue French language training overseas — which by the way they never did, it all moved back to Washington, a very bad mistake — they sent these two women to Paris so that they could continue paying their salary, and let them teach a course there while they made decisions about how to continue with the program. So I ended up, and my wife, taking French in the basement of the Defense Attach#'s office in Paris. I suppose I learned as much as I would have on the Riviera, but I think I probably would have preferred to be down there.

During this time my assignment was being decided, and when I was told it was Dar es Salaam we went home for home leave, and I talked to my Personnel Officer. It was sort of vague as to why they couldn't possibly have worked out an assignment in the French-speaking part of Africa. Nevertheless, I went to Dar es Salaam, and after having invested this money in my French course, which was considerable, I was next assigned to a French-speaking post in 1975. So I had a bit of brushing up to do.

Q: Okay, you arrived in Dar es Salaam and this was prior to independence wasn't it? Or just prior to it?

KING: This was two years before independence. The situation there was completely different from Cairo — sort of a shock, really. Having never been overseas until I went to Cairo, I looked at things from the point of view of my experience in Paris learning French; and in Cairo in a large Embassy. Then I find myself in a really run-down seaport on the Indian Ocean, in which the U.S. Consulate...

Q: It was a Consulate General, or...

KING: It became a Consulate General for reasons I don't understand, but it was a Consulate in the beginning, and it was reporting to our Consulate General in Nairobi. The Consulate consisted of the top floor of the Cable and Wireless building. There was no air conditioning, the lighting consisted of fly-catcher lights hanging down on cords. There was the Consul, myself who did the administrative and consular work, and another officer who was supposed to do the political and economic work. There was an American who was married to an English shipping agent there, who worked in the Consulate. And then we had one Foreign Service woman who was secretary and administrative assistant. And that was the entire staff. There were certain advantages, given the primitive state of our equipment, in that we could carry our telegrams down to the floor below and just give them to the Cable and Wireless company.

Q: As you saw it, what was the political situation like at that time?

KING: I think we saw it better than the local officials did who were so used to the way things had been run in Tanganyika, that they really couldn't believe that the government in London had any intention of giving independence anytime soon. In fact I remember talking to the chief secretary of the...

Q: These were British?

KING: Oh, these were all British.

Q: I mean, white British?

KING: Oh, all, all. I asked him, “What about independence?” And he said, “Well, they'll be ready in about 300 years, but they'll probably get it in about 25.” Eighteen months later they were independent. It caught the Colonial Service people there completely by surprise as far as I could see. The Colonial Secretary came down there and cut a deal over a period of about three days, and independence was set. The government in London had decided that this was what they were going to do. The British had never invested very

much in Tanganyika. They had in Kenya, for example. There was a strong attachment there, whereas the British knew that they weren't going to be in Tanganyika forever.

Q: It had been a German colony.

KING: It was a German colony up to the first World War, and very little was done between the two wars, and even afterwards. And when we arrived there we stayed at what was called The New Africa Hotel. Well, The New Africa Hotel in fact was a building that had been put up for the Kaiser to stay in when he came on hunting expeditions in Africa. Actually, the Kaiser never came but that was the reason the building was put up, and nothing more modern than that existed.

Q: You say our Consulate had a clearer picture of the way thing were. Why was this?

KING: I don't mean that we had a clearer picture than the British government, who knew precisely what was going to happen, because they were planning what they were going to do. But I don't think the average colonial servant in Tanganyika realized what London was up to. I think that we saw it coming because we were not emotionally involved in the situation.

Q: What was your impression when you first arrived of British rule there, colonial rule? How effective was it?

KING: You can say several things about it. If you're not going to invest any money, which the British did not, I mean there was not really even at that time a public school system. There were grants given to some of the missionary schools that were established there by the various churches, and there were quite a few. There was virtually nothing put into infrastructure. There was one paved road in the country, it ran 125 miles, and Tanganyika is a very large country. If you look at it, however, from the point of view of effective administration given small resources, they did an amazing job. The district officer would be responsible for an area the size of a state in the United States, and he might

have one British assistant, and then he would have a small staff of other people, and he ran that district by himself. They all spoke Swahili. They were extremely well trained and disciplined, and I suppose no more than a few hundred people ran the country. And they did it very well, provided you're just running it and are not planning on developing it very much. Tanganyika was one of the poorest countries in the world at that time, and it still is.

Q: How about directions when you came out of Washington? Were you given a pep talk, or anything like this — things are going to be happening there, and we want to be at the beginning.

KING: Yes. That was, in fact, the era in which that was true. G. Mennen Williams was the first appointment of Jack Kennedy. Before any Cabinet officer, he appointed the Assistant Secretary for Africa. There was a decision taken at that time that we would have embassies in every African country, no matter how small, and we're still living with that. Once you make that decision, it's very difficult to reverse it. We gave a lot of emphasis in the first year or two of Kennedy's administration to Africa.

Q: You came in at sort of the end of the Eisenhower...

KING: In that period there was no particular interest in Africa as far as I could see.

Q: You were just going out to a job.

KING: That's right, and you didn't really give that much thought. With Kennedy everything changed.

Q: What was the effect on your operation? Kennedy came in, Mennen Williams was the first appointment to the State Department in the Kennedy administration. He had a lot of political clout, I mean, delivered Michigan to the Kennedy side. Were you all of a sudden electrified, or what happened?

KING: Yes, I think it made a big difference, and I think we were sort of not prepared for it. Williams came — I think the first trip to Africa, and Dar was the second place he stopped; and certainly everybody got the message that Africa was important, and that it was domestically important politically in the United States.

Q: How about contacts with the people of Tanganyika, like Julius Nyerere and others? I mean, was there much, or when you arrived pretty much wedded to the colonial administrators.

KING: Oh, no. I think there was some resentment among the British colonial administrators, but we saw everybody in the African political movement. Julius Nyerere had just stopped being a school teacher, and he was chairman of the Tanganyika African National Union. The reason, I think, that he had stopped being a school teacher was simply because they told him he had to choose. It was a Jesuit school, and in fact the person who told me that was a Jesuit priest from New Jersey who told him he had to make up his mind where he wanted to be. So he did. We entertained him in our homes. I was a Vice Consul, obviously young and very low ranking, but I had Julius Nyerere to dinner and all of his chief lieutenants. What is forgotten, I think, and it was forgotten almost immediately after independence, like it had never happened was, that while there was not segregation as such, if you attended a social function there was almost never an African there — I mean an official of the Tanganyika government. At receptions, what you might have was a traditional chief, but certainly you didn't see anything of African politicians at any of these.

Q: You had a Consul General at the time. Was it hard...you were looking at it from the point of view of the young officer there, turning our tradition way of running...here's this post as far as dealing with this new movement. Were we, at least the Consul General, co-opted into the British colonial system?

KING: No, not at all. I think our interest was mainly in the Africans. And I think, as I said, we realized the British would be leaving. There was a certain amount of antagonism, not between the British and American governments as such, but between people who had lived in Tanganyika for 25 years, knew the language, knew the people, knew their jobs and were very good; that suddenly Americans come in and seem to want to tell everybody what to do, and get involved in everything, and stirring up trouble by talking to all these African leaders while they're delicately trying to manage things. But that's a local problem. That's not a governmental problem.

Q: Was there much that you could report, or was there much interest in what we were reporting?

KING: There was a lot of interest in Julius Nyerere, I think, because he was seen as someone with ideas, better educated than most of the emerging African leaders. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, I believe Julius Nyerere was the first African from Tanganyika to have ever received a university degree.

Q: Was there any feeling that we were trying to...this is probably the wrong word, but to co-opt the area as opposed to the colonial officials? I mean were we trying to...did we have any policy considerations about dealing with Nyerere?

KING: I think there was in the Bureau of African Affairs in the State Department under G. Mennen Williams, yes. I think there was a very positive attitude towards Nyerere; and yes, we were trying to get close to him; and yes, it created some resentment.

Q: Do we have any real interest in Tanganyika?

KING: Today?

Q: Then.

KING: Our interests, I think, were in the political direction that the African continent took. We certainly didn't have any economic interest of consequence.

Q: Was there concern about the "Soviet menace?"

KING: I think that was probably the most important factor in our policy toward Africa. The Soviet Union at that time was seen as a great threat, was very active in Africa, and we wanted to counter that. As the years passed I think it became clear that the Soviet Union was not prepared to put any really major resources into Africa, and the threat was limited to places like South Africa in which there were conflicts of interest that were important. But in the rest of Black Africa, I think we took a more relaxed view of it than after a few years.

Q: How about Zanzibar? Did that play any role? I mean eventually it was amalgamated into Tanganyika, but, at that time, was it a separate entity when you were there?

KING: Yes, it was. It was a protectorate under the British. It had a completely separate administration with its own governor, really no connection at all with Tanganyika, and traditionally there hasn't been much connection. The connections that Zanzibar had were with the Persian Gulf.

Q: What used to be the Sultanate of Muscat.

KING: That's right. And the Arab element in Zanzibar was still in charge in theory, although the British, of course, actually ran things, and they were a fairly small group. I had a lot to do with Zanzibar actually because we decided in 1960, about halfway through my tour, we decided that we would open a Consulate in Zanzibar because it seemed that both the Soviet Union, and particularly the Chinese, were interested in Zanzibar. So I was chosen to do some of the leg work, and I guess I made 15 or 20 trips to Zanzibar in that year, and in the process acquired a house for our Consul, and also an old building which I had, by talking to a local British historian, determined was the spot on which our Consulate had stood — which was closed in 1833, I believe. I don't know if it's the same building, but in

any case it was being used as a barn for donkeys. So we bought that, and redid it and made it into a little Consulate, and we bought a house.

While all this was going on, there was a really interesting development in that we were in the early days of space exploration. In fact, we were just orbiting the earth under Project Mercury, and we needed a series of tracking stations around the world. Tanganyika was seen as probably not a good choice for political reasons, but we needed one in the immediate area. I guess we felt the British would be in Zanzibar longer. In any case, I was asked, as a very junior officer, to go over to Zanzibar and talk to the Governor, which I did, and to the Chief Secretary who, of course, was also British, about the possibility of having a tracking station in Zanzibar.

After a period of some months, we did reach an agreement. There were also talks, of course, going on between Washington and London on this; given a piece of land, and while I was there we did set up a tracking station. Well, despite our having picked what we thought was a safe place, it turned out to be the biggest political issue the islands had ever had. Of course, it hadn't had very many important ones in its history. And it was said by both political parties, one of which was predominantly Arab, and the other predominantly African, that this was a missile launching site, and that Zanzibar was in danger of nuclear retaliation. Well, as part of our campaign to counter this, we took the heads of both political parties to Cape Canaveral, and I accompanied them to see exactly what it was we were doing. We had dinner with the astronauts, and they got back and, of course, they said exactly the same thing they'd said before they left. They knew perfectly well it wasn't true.

The supporters of one of the leaders of the political party in Zanzibar, not too long afterwards, assassinated his rival; and his supporters in turn assassinated him. So both of the men I took to Cape Canaveral disappeared from the scene. We did keep the tracking station there. After independence it became untenable, but by that time we had alternatives.

Q: You left there in 1961. You came back to Washington?

KING: I came back to Washington just before independence, and I was the desk officer for Tanganyika and Zanzibar which, of course, became one country, for the next two years. In fact, the first thing I had to do in my job was to help arrange a state visit for Julius Nyerere, as the first leader of the independent country. During that period I guess I'll have to say that I don't think a great deal of interest really took place. We became involved in an AID program there, and there was a fair amount of political activity. But it was a quieter period than I have enjoyed in most of my assignments.

Q: There were a couple of things that happened with Nyerere. For one thing he had not yet turned the country into a socialist morass.

KING: I think he was headed in that direction all along, and I always thought that. I mean I never had much doubt about that. Given the low base that they started from, I mean you didn't see some precipitous drop in the living standard because it is the second or third poorest country in the world.

Q: What was the feeling about Zanzibar? I mean Zanzibar had not had its riots then, or did that happen when you were there?

KING: It happened while I was back in Washington, and although that was a traumatic experience for our people, and, of course, all this ended up with the two countries becoming combined. And, of course, that was the end of Arab rule. I don't think it was a political event, even though Everett Dirksen, was the keynote speaker at the Republican convention, and had things to say about our Consul being marched off at gunpoint. I think the political significance was extremely limited.

Q: Barry, I wonder if you could describe...I mean, you came in '61, and I find this is one of the really interesting periods in bureaucracy in the State Department when you had...maybe it was a moribund, but it was a rather quiet bureau...Africa was certainly not

at the top of anybody's agenda. The Kennedy administration came in, and it had a very political figure — G. Mennen Williams — who brought in Wayne Fredericks with him?

KING: That's right.

Q: And they certainly seized the attention of many people within the State Department. I wonder if you could give your impression of how you found the bureau, how it operated, what its interests were at that time?

KING: I think there were a lot of domestic political reasons for the way the bureau operated. I think Williams had probably presidential ambitions at that time. You had some true believers in the importance of Africa, people like Wayne Fredericks. And Africa was so new that a lot of Foreign Service Officers thought there might be a real career there. The bureau changed rapidly, it grew. When I went out to Dar es Salaam the bureau had just been formed about that time. Prior to that it was part of European Affairs, because all of Africa, of course, was a European colony in one form or another except for Ethiopia and Liberia. I was only there 18 months. I guess I didn't share this enthusiasm entirely. I thought there was a certain amount of political hype in it, and there were some important places in Africa but in a lot of them I saw limited U.S. interest. So I decided to go do something else.

Q: I have to say we parallel to a certain extent. I was in Intelligence and Research for Africa about the same time, and took a look around. We had these true believers who thought Africa was the wave of the future, and these people sort of planning out your career, I volunteered for Serbo- Croatian training to go to Yugoslavia.

KING: That's interesting. I volunteered for Greek.

Q: But I mean this was...there was a difference between some of the officers, wasn't there? I mean you might have the true believer. Could you explain a little about what we were referring to as a true believer?

KING: I think it's awfully hard to draw the line between people who saw a great future for Africa, and people who saw a great career for themselves in Africa. There were possibilities there. For one thing you've got the largest number of ambassadorships in the world, as small as the country may be. I think that's a factor in it.

Q: And not just being an ambassador, but also having a post with the responsibility at an early age, which if you were in Europe it never would happen.

KING: Exactly. As I said, I had Julius Nyerere as my guest for dinner. I mean, you were hardly going to have the most important political figure in France or England for a junior officer's dinner.

Q: Yes, and there is something that gets the adrenalin flowing.

KING: Oh sure.

Q: Why did you pick Greek training? You took Greek training from 1963 to '64.

KING: That's fairly easy. I wanted to go to the Mediterranean, and if you look around the Mediterranean...I wanted to take a hard language, there is not much choice if you don't want the Arab world, and I was not particularly interested in the Arab world. And Greek sounded like a lot of fun.

Q: You took a year of Greek training, and then you were sent to Cyprus, was that it?

KING: That's right.

Q: You were there from 1964 to '67. There were really only three places — Athens, Salonika and Cyprus.

KING: That's right.

Q: What was the situation on Cyprus when you arrived?

KING: Bad. I was supposed to be there on a certain date in August, and my wife was delivering our first child, which was a week or so late. So I got an extension of several days so I could be here when the child was born. I was supposed to leave two days later. Well, I found out I couldn't leave because no airlines were flying to Cyprus because the Turks were bombing Cyprus, and so I was delayed several more days before going there. When I arrived, without my wife — not because of the child, although that would have delayed her a few weeks — but because once again we found ourselves in a situation where no dependents were allowed. So when our daughter was six weeks old, my wife flew to Beirut. Now it's sort of ironic, the situation is reversed, because now you might use Cyprus as a safe haven for Beirut, but not the other way around. But Beirut was very peaceful in those days, and she stayed there for a couple of months, and then once again the order on dependents was lifted, and she came to Cyprus. But all during the time there the political situation was tense, there was a lot of violence, and if you were an American you didn't feel safe at all. And as later events proved it was a dangerous place for us. In fact, the Ambassador to Cyprus was shot down right in front of my office door.

Q: Rodger Davies.

KING: That's right — after I was gone.

Q: Could you explain the political situation, and politico- military, the whole situation on Cyprus at that time?

KING: As far as the United States was concerned, it was a no-win situation because — I guess this is sort of common to islands — a very self-centered view of the world. And you were either for the Greek side, or you were for the Turkish. But it was almost impossible to be for both, and since United States policy was trying to be even-handed we had a lot of Cypriots, both Greek and Turks, who disliked us for opposite reasons. It was very

threatening. The island about eight months before had been divided in two by fighting, and the green line ran across the island, and ran through the center of the capitol, Nicosia.

Q: When did Cyprus become independent?

KING: Let's see, I got there in '64, in '63. And almost immediately law and order broke down. Vicious fighting, like most civil wars, in which a lot of civilians were murdered. The Turks all retreated to Turkish areas. The Greeks, they had been mixed before a good bit, retreated to Greek areas, and the north of the island became entirely Turkish, and the rest of the island became entirely Greek. You couldn't travel between those points if you were a Greek or Turk, you'd be killed, that's all there was to it; but you could, if you were a diplomat, but it was risky business and several times when I was driving in both the Greek and the Turkish parts of the islands, you'd be stopped by some 15-year old kid with an automatic weapon poked in your face. There were violent incidents all the time. Nevertheless, we had a house on the north coast and we went there on the weekends. It was a short drive of an hour or so. It belonged to an English woman, and they had all fled when the fighting broke out. She could get absolutely nothing for it because at the end of the street was a Turkish machine gun post. So we lived there anyway, it was close to the water, and we paid 10 pounds a month rent for it. That's what we offered and they'd take anything you offered.

Greeks could go there to Kyrenia, which was a sort of a resort area, but they had to be accompanied by a United Nations armored convoy that left every morning, and came back in the afternoon. No sane Greek would have traveled any other way. We successfully did business with both sides, and as a matter of policy we had a Greek language officer who really never did any business with the Turks. And we had a Turkish language officer also, who never had anything to do with the Greeks. And that is the way it was, and that's about the only way you could operate. I was the Greek language officer.

Q: Who was the Turkish?

KING: George McFarland. He spent all of his time on the other side of the green line. I would go there occasionally but everybody considered me pro-Greek. For some reason people think if you speak their language, you're their friend, which doesn't prove a thing. Why were we training all these people in Chinese, and Russian in those days? Anyway, it was a very interesting tour because there were a lot of attempts to bring about a solution in which we were actively involved. My job, however, as economic officer but being the Greek language officer in the Embassy, I got involved in the political situation a lot. So that was fun. I did spend a lot of time on the economic side of things. One of the most powerful people in the country was the head of the cooperative movement, and he was seen as a potential successor to Archbishop Makarios, as President. It did not turn out that way, but I spent a good deal of time with him. Then I spent a good bit of time with the Cyprus balance of payments, because Cyprus was spending a lot of money on weapons...

Q: You're saying Cyprus. You're talking about the Greeks?

KING: Yes, and what was the legitimate government; you had to accept that. We questioned how well they were going to be able to survive with these large outlays for weapons. As it turned out they did very well. The Greek Cypriots are very industrious, and clever, and despite the fact that the island was divided, over the years they have become more and more prosperous, instead of going down the drain as some people thought they would.

Q: Where was their economic strength?

KING: Tourism, agriculture, mining, shipping. They had a lot of things for such a small country.

Q: Did you have much to do with Archbishop Makarios?

KING: Personally, no.

Q: What is the reflection of this man that you were getting from the Ambassador?

KING: Sort of respect for his uncanny skill in getting things done the way he wanted, and not so much respect for his motives and what he was up to. I think we tended to regard Archbishop Makarios a little bit like we did Nasser; that he was a potentially bad influence on some of his neighbors, and in the non-aligned movement we regarded him very much as an opportunist. And also we had the same problem, that is that he was getting weapons from the Soviet Union, and had various other arrangements with them, and tolerated, and encouraged the Communist Party, always making sure it didn't get an election majority.

Q: How did we see the Soviet Communist menace there? Did we see it as a real factor?

KING: Well, again, I think the professionals on the ground probably took it less seriously than Washington did. We were concerned. I guess probably the greatest concern was that it was provocative, and that Makarios was going to carry things so far that one day the Turks were going to invade. And, of course, that is eventually what happened.

Q: Did you get any feel that if the chips were down...we obviously wanted to keep these two allies from fighting each other, but if the chips were down where we were going to be standing?

KING: Oh, I think, as you say, we would try to keep some good relations with both. I don't think good relations with Cyprus would have been very important to us, but with mainland Greece, yes. But I think in the end Turkey was more important to us than Greece.

Q: Who was it — Toby Belcher was the Ambassador?

KING: Yes.

Q: How did he operate? What sort of a person was he?

KING: I think Toby was about what you wanted for Cyprus; very easy going, gregarious fellow. He made a lot of friends, and managed to do it on both sides. About the only person who was really successful at that. He had a lot of good Turkish contacts, and of course, everybody who was anybody in the Greek community, and managed to convince them both that he thought highly of them. He worked very hard at it, and I think was emotionally involved in preventing a disaster happening in Cyprus. And he thought, I believe, that an armed conflict was the thing we must do our best to prevent. The rest of it would take care of itself if we were patient, and manipulated things, and waited. He worked towards that end all the time he was there. Of course, things really went sour after he was gone.

Q: How did we view enosis, the idea of unity between Greece and the community there, Colonel Grivas, and all that?

KING: I think everybody thought Colonel Grivas was a menace of the first order, and that he was deliberately trying to create a conflict in which there would be a war. And I think that's correct. I think we thought enosis was a fantasy. Nothing like that was ever going to happen. The British offered Cyprus to Greece in the first World War, and they refused it; mainly because the King of Greece was married to the Kaiser's sister, and didn't want to get involved, and forever afterwards regretted that, but from then on it was too late. But no Greek politician could ever say it, you know these facts very well. When finally the Papadopoulos government got itself involved, and then after Papadopoulos was overthrown, they really did something provocative, and all of that. Well, what happened is exactly what you'd expect would happen. I think we had it figured out all along.

Q: So you didn't feel that there was a thirst on the part of the Greek Cypriot population?

KING: That's a funny one. If you asked them, they would say yes; and if you said, “You don't really want it,” they would become extremely angry. But, in fact, I'm not sure they did want it because they knew the Greeks looked down on them. Of course, all these

Greeks who were there in civilian clothes were Army officers, and they did mingle with the Cypriots, and they had a very low opinion of each other. It's interesting what they called each other in slang. The Greeks called Cypriots, gaidhouria, donkeys. And the Cypriots called Greeks, kalmaradhes, which means people always scribbling with a pen.

Q: Well, you were moving over to the scribblers with a pen. You didn't really move out of the firing line, at least it was certainly an active time. You went to Athens in 1967.

KING: '67.

Q: Before or after April 22, '67, the time of the colonels attempted coup?

KING: After.

Q: Could you describe the situation in Greece at the time you went there? This is 1967.

KING: I think a polarization of opinion both in...well, within the Embassy for one thing, and also I think you had it in the U.S. government. The usual kind of polarization you have. One side seeing a great threat in Andreas Papandreou in the left; and the other side, quite naturally being very much opposed to this imposed dictatorship of the right. And as you know, through the five years that I was there, there was some internal division within the Embassy about what American policy should be.

Q: I wonder if you could describe, when you first arrived there, Phillips Talbot was the Ambassador, and how the Embassy viewed things? You were doing what there?

KING: I was in the economic section.

Q: How did you see the Embassy's internal view of this situation?

KING: I think Phil Talbot was basically quite unhappy with the situation that he had to deal with. But I think that he felt that he had to work with what was there, as best he could, and

try to move the situation back to a more democratic regime. I don't think, in fact, there was an awful lot that we were going to be able to do about it until it just played itself out. In fact, that's pretty much the way it was.

Q: Did we have fairly open relations with people? Did you feel we were holding back as an Embassy, being somewhat standoffish?

KING: To whom?

Q: To the Greek government.

KING: A bit standoffish, yes. There was a factor then that was soon out of the picture, and that was the King. And I think we tried to make use of this third factor, to try to bring about a better situation. But once the King made his attempt, and that failed and he was exiled, and eventually, of course, the royal family was finished in Greece, then you had a polarization in Greek politics between the left and the right. The regime tried to make it very difficult for us to have anything to do with the left. They had some success with the U.S. government. I think in particular the best support they were getting was from Spiro Agnew.

Q: The Nixon administration came in in '69, and we had a new Ambassador there, Henry Tasca, who is a controversial figure. How did you see him? When you were there you saw both sides of two different Ambassadors.

KING: I think there was a definite change, and I think there was much closer contact with the regime than there had been under Phil Talbot. I think relations with the opposition were a good bit inhibited under Tasca. Tasca saw a lot of Papadopoulos, and his chief lieutenants. I occasionally served as an interpreter and went with him to dinner parties at Papadopoulos's house, and this kind of thing. So I saw a good bit of that, although I was not in the political section at that time. Eventually I did switch over to the political section. I was in Greece, as I said, for five years which was awfully long.

Q: Long, long. Particularly coming out of the Cyprus pressure cooker.

KING: As far as I know, I've probably had a longer continuous tour in the Greek-speaking world than anybody in the U.S. Foreign Service in our time.

Q: I would imagine so, yes. What was your impression of Tasca's operating style? I mean how did this Papadopoulos- Tasca chemistry work?

KING: I think Tasca was a more secretive kind of person. He was more inclined to concentrate on what he could do personally, without letting other people know too much about what was going on; as compared with Talbot who I think was more open, and led more of a team effort. I don't think people felt very much under Tasca that they were part of a team in which they could influence his views on things. I think a lot of people felt his mind had been made up before he ever got there.

Q: How did you feel...the potpourri, and the influences...I'm thinking of three different areas that I think were important: one would be our political section, then there would be the CIA, and then there would be the American military; all of whom had a role. Could you describe how you felt about these people coming out, and what they were doing in our Embassy? We're talking about the Tasca period.

KING: I would say we were being pretty supportive with the exception of some people in the political section of the Embassy. I think we were being pretty supportive.

Q: I was Consul General there for four years at this time, and my impression was that the CIA, for its own reasons, was playing almost a pernicious role. Again, I was coming as a political reporter, but they seemed to discount country team meetings. Sort of a nasty business was going on in the Papadopoulos regime.

KING: That's right. I share that opinion.

Q: And I also felt that our military had too many Greek Americans in it, because of the language and they wanted to come back, it tended to be 110 percent super patriot, and thought this was fine, which was not a very good mix at this time.

KING: That's true, and on top of that, whereas the other parts of the mission that were interested in the politics of Greece, whatever you may think of their opinions, were competent and knew what they were doing. It was my opinion that the American military never really understood what was going on. They had emotional reactions to things.

Q: It was not, obviously, where we were sending our top grade people.

KING: But that's generally true. The Defense Attach# assignment is a dead end. I mean it's well known it's very rare for anyone who goes as a colonel as a Defense Attach# to ever get anything else much after that. No, they don't send their best people. You know you get ahead by commanding troops in the U.S. military, and that's not commanding troops. And they've got this long standing prejudice, so you're not going to get very good quality with personnel policies like that.

Q: Was there sort of an unrest would you say within the Embassy because of at least on the part of the Ambassador, and the CIA, and to a certain extent, at least a tacit, acceptance by the military of our increasingly close relations with the colonels?

KING: Yes. I think there was, and I think at times it got rather bitter.

Q: Can you think of any times?

KING: All the time. There were ups and downs. It depended on what was happening. Something would happen that some people in the Embassy would see as an outrage, and others would, as you said, try to excuse. This happened all the time.

Q: How about from Washington? Were we getting any particular direction?

KING: You see, even though by then I was beginning to get up in rank a little, and even though I was the number two person in the political section, that doesn't mean by any means I was being cut in on a lot of what was going on; particularly since my sympathy for some of it was suspect. I guess my feeling was that Henry Kissinger, whose main concern was that we do nothing to alienate Turkey — you know, sacrifice the colonels if necessary. The next consideration was, we wanted stability in Greece, which we allegedly had under the colonels. It proved to be not as stable as people thought it was. And also, Andreas Papandreou turned out to be not as big a threat as many thought. He finally did get into power, which was seen as just a terrible thing to happen; and now he's got himself out of power again by his own corrupt behavior.

Q: At the time though he was considered to be a very dangerous person.

KING: Oh, a tool of the Soviets, and all of that, and without passing judgement on that, he just didn't prove equal to doing anything to a drastic degree.

Q: Greek politics, as usual.

KING: As far as I can see. Of course, I was gone by then.

Q: Were we feeling at all the pressure of the Greek- American lobby? Did you feel that in the political section?

KING: Yes, I guess so. We felt it in both directions though. We got a lot of people whose families felt they were being persecuted by the colonels, who were talking to their Congressmen. And you also had some who would support any Greek government as long as it was Greek, and therefore we mustn't do anything to it.

Q: Granted, Tasca particularly was sort of cutting people out, but did you get any feel about how we were sharing and working as American policy toward this volatile area with our Embassy in Ankara? Or were we just doing our thing, and they were doing their thing?

KING: I think Tasca had a sort of antagonistic view towards the Turks, and our Embassy in Turkey, just from a purely personal point of view. If he'd been in Ankara, he would have had the same feeling towards the Greeks.

Q: So you left there in 1972, and things really blew up in '74.

KING: Yes.

Q: When you came back to Washington you spent a couple of years in Personnel?

KING: Before that I spent a year at Princeton. I had senior training there, and did some work on the Mediterranean which is my real interest. Then I went to Personnel for a couple of years where I was head of training and of liaison with other agencies.

Q: Then to move on, unless there's something...

KING: Nothing particularly exciting there.

Q: Then you were Deputy Chief of Mission in Tunis from 1975 to '79. During that period was Ed Mulcahy the Ambassador?

KING: I had three Ambassadors. I guess I have two claims to distinction: one is I believe I've had longer continuous Greek service than anybody else; and the other one is, I've been DCM to more Ambassadors than anybody I know of. I was the DCM for nine years to six different Ambassadors. I don't think anybody is even very close to that.

Q: There's a saying you shouldn't be a DCM too often, or you'll get chewed up and spit out.

KING: Well, no, it seemed to work the other way. It was Ambassadors who kept leaving. Actually what happened was that the assignments just happened to work that way. So I had about a year with Talcott Seelye, who was an Arabist. I had two and a half years

with Ed Mulcahy, and then after that I had about six months with Steve Bosworth. All good men.

Q: What was the situation from '75 to '79 period in Tunisia?

KING: Good relations. An excellent post from the point of view of living conditions, nice people, none of this tension that the rest of my career has been, an interesting job. We had an AID program that was growing, military assistance was beginning to get started up. We had a close political dialogue with the Tunisians. I was in charge a fair amount of the time, so I got to have a number of meetings with President Bourguiba. I guess in a country with an elite that small, I probably knew just about everybody there was to know. Of course, in this job of DCM you spend a lot of your time not on the outside, but on the inside, because any Embassy that's run right, the Ambassador doesn't have to worry about running the Embassy, that's the DCM's job. When you do have to do something outside, is when the Ambassador is not there and then you suddenly change roles completely and you're the Charg#. And I did a lot of that there. I guess the concerns of the Tunisians, and to a certain extent our concerns too, were that they were going to be subverted in some way by either Algeria or Libya. Libya was a concern throughout the time I was there. Our relations with the Tunisians, I think, got increasingly better the whole time I was there.

Q: Was Bourguiba in full control in that period?

KING: He was in full control of the country, but he wasn't in full control of himself. He was senile, but nobody dared cross him so any whim of his was carried out even though it made no sense. He was a real force for stability in the country, and is what kept Tunisia on a straight course for so many years. But eventually he became just the opposite. He became the reason that Tunisia could not progress any further because he wouldn't accept anything new. He was violently opposed to all forms of Islamic fundamentalism, with which there had to be some compromise. So his solution was always to round people up and

put them in jail. And eventually, long after I left, the situation got so bad that he was just sort of taken out of office, and put in the palace, at Monastir, where he still is. The problem with his mind was going on for many, many years. When I went to Tunisia, I read through files that he wasn't going to live much longer, or that his mind had collapsed, that were ten years old, and it was still going on. And when you'd go call on him, he would tell the same old stories that he'd told you the last time, and I asked people who had served there 15 years before and he always had the same set of stories.

Q: I assume that Hooker Doolittle...

KING: You know about Hooker Doolittle.

Q: I talked to Walt Cutler on this, and when Archie Roosevelt...

KING: I heard about Hooker Doolittle any number of times.

Q: Hooker Doolittle by the way for the record, was an American Consul who befriended him in his earlier days.

KING: Hooker Doolittle was also the brother of Jimmy Doolittle who bombed Tokyo. And Hooker Doolittle did indeed befriend Bourguiba and as his reward for doing so, the French asked the State Department to remove him, which they promptly did.

Q: What was our concerns when you were there about...did we feel there was a menace both from Libya and Algeria?

KING: Yes.

Q: What would be the problem for us?

KING: Well, in both cases probably Libya was more of a threat, but at the time the Algerian regime was more radical than it probably is today. Our fear was that they would support an

opposition element that would take over by violent means, or subvert the country in some way probably working with Moslem fundamentalists. Nothing really serious ever came of it. There were incidents all the time, people would infiltrate the country, they would capture people with a truck load of machine guns. This kind of thing was going on all the time. But the Tunisians had a pretty good control over the security situation, and one of the reasons our relations got better is that we helped them with security — both the police, and the army. And as DCM I spent a lot of time with military people. The Foreign Ministry was very close to the Embassy. We had good working relationships at levels all up and down in the Foreign Ministry. We had a polite relationship with the French. We both had the same objective there. I think we're always resented in ex- French territory. We got along pretty well actually.

Q: Did the French play much of a role there by this time?

KING: Culturally, yes. In fact, it's a country in which virtually nobody, I mean just zero, speak any English, and although obviously Arabic is the language of the house, you really don't need it to function in Tunisian society. Obviously in a village you would have to speak their brand of Arabic, but if you were in Tunis, French is perfectly adequate.

Q: One last thing. How about the impact of the Israeli factor in our dealings there in the period of Camp David, and all this? How did this impact? Or did it have much impact?

KING: I think — and obviously there's always an emotional element where religion and Israel are involved — I think the Tunisians were more interested in appearing in the right postures as far as the rest of the Arab world was concerned, than really interested in the Israeli problem, which is very far removed from them.

Q: Your time was up in Tunisia in 1979, and moved to what sounds like a difficult assignment as DCM in Islamabad, and you served there, my God, for five years.

KING: Four and a half.

Q: Four and a half years, during a very critical time. Can you explain what you were up to?

KING: Yes. Of course, this was a big step up for me because Pakistan is a very large Embassy but more than that. At that time, I would say it maybe was one of the half dozen most important Embassies we had in the world from the point of view of everything that was going on there. I arrived as Charge, I had never seen the Ambassador.

Q: Who was?

KING: Arthur Hummel. He wanted to take home leave, and as it worked out I just arrived, and I was in charge of this huge Embassy, and never seen the Ambassador I worked for. But that worked out okay, and he came back in about...

Q: You arrived when?

KING: I'm not real sure about the date. It must have been about August. Anyway, he returned and then I went back to my usual job; very much of a management job in normal times because there are three subordinate posts: in Peshawar, in Lahore, and Karachi. And during my tour from a very small AID program, we grew to have one of the largest in the world. Also a big military assistance program. So there was a lot of coordination internally to do among a number of agencies. But then things kept happening all during my tour.

Q: Could you take some of these, chronologically, that impacted on this?

KING: The first one, of course, was the Embassy was burned. Now this is not the greatest disaster we've ever had now, but I think at the time it happened, it probably was in the whole history of U.S. diplomacy. As far as I'm aware, its still the only incident of an entire Embassy being destroyed, I mean everything.

Q: How did this come about?

KING: The way it came about was that...of course relations with Iran were a problem because there is a large Shiite minority in Pakistan. They were very antagonistic towards us because of our relations with Iran. The day before Thanksgiving...

Q: 1979.

KING: In '79, a group who later turned out to be Shiites, seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca and were driven out after a great deal of bloodshed and trouble by the Saudis. That was broadcast early in the morning, and I've never quite got the story straight, and there are apparently some broadcasts that were never taped by anybody and it's a little murky. Somebody alleged, probably the Iranians, who may well have been involved themselves, probably were, that the Americans and Israelis were behind this sacrilege. Now you've got to understand how things are in Pakistan. It's an emotionally volatile place, and once when the Italians made a film about Muhammad, or were going to make a film about Muhammad, an army of people marched on the Italian Embassy to burn it down, and it took the Army to turn them back. This is something we get from the newspaper. It's easy to stir up this kind of situation. You have a large, very poor, very ignorant population, very religious and emotional, and if they're Shiite, then it's in spades.

We were not too concerned about security because, like Canberra, Islamabad is an artificial city. It's built out in the middle of nowhere, it has no urban population, it all consists of diplomats and bureaucrats. There's no industry, there's nothing. So the government didn't take security there too seriously. There is, however, about 20 miles away a major population center in Rawalpindi. Well, I guess, the way they felt was, or they later claimed, that given the topography of things, a large crowd could hardly walk through this landscape 20 miles to do anybody any damage, except of course, there's this big six-lane highway that goes to the airport and then on to Rawalpindi. So all you really have to do is just close the road. The problem is they didn't close the road. The word got about, and somebody, and I think the Iranians and Palestinians were probably mixed up in this

— there are a lot of Iranians and Palestinians students there — somebody said that they should go and avenge themselves on the Americans by attacking the American Embassy.

We didn't know any of this at the time, of course. Rawalpindi is one end of a truck route that goes to the Khyber Pass, and these big trucks, old fashioned vehicles, go in large numbers back and forth between the northwest frontier province and the Punjab. And in Rawalpindi there's a big market area, where on any given day you find hundreds of these big trucks which are offloading one thing, and are taking on something for the return journey. So what happened was, the mob got the truck drivers to take them to Islamabad, and they came in the thousands.

I was in my office, and I was having a talk with Father Lee, who is an Irish American priest who had been in Pakistan for many years, about a Thanksgiving service we were going to have the next day. And about 12:00 we finished what we had to discuss, and I said, “It's about lunch time, I'll walk down with you and go home for lunch,” which I always did. So I went down and got in my car, and was driven home. I'd been there about 15 minutes when I got a call which said, “Don't come back, stay where you are. There's a crowd marching on the Embassy.” I did that, and quickly discovered that the Ambassador was also at home for lunch. Just by some fluke out of 150 people who were in the Embassy that day, only maybe five people were outside the compound when this happened.

It was a big brand new Embassy. It cost 23 million dollars. I know because that's the claim we put in, and around it it had a big brick wall. It had bars on the windows, and it had big sliding metal doors, and a lot of things like that. It was reasonably good security, not the best, but given the situation we probably didn't concentrate on that as much as we would have if it had been in downtown Rawalpindi. In any case, the wall didn't stop anybody long. They just drove the trucks right through the wall.

There was good coordination inside the Embassy. The Administrative Counselor, and the Political Counselor, and a couple of other people led things. They locked all the safes,

and retreated into the vault. The vault was on the top floor, it's a three-story building. The Marines were positioned outside, eventually they all retreated into the vault. There was one Marine up on the roof keeping a lookout, and he was killed by someone who had a weapon. It may be that they had weapons, but they overpowered the police detachment, and took their weapons from them, and they may have used those. There was a Warrant Officer who went to his apartment, because we had 30-35 apartments in the compound. He went to his apartment and locked himself in. Two of our FSN employees locked themselves in their office rather than going to the vault. All three of these people were killed by smoke inhalation.

What the mob did, and you know, motivations were different as they are with mobs, after it was all over we noticed that not a single typewriter was any longer there, no liquor was left in the American Club, not one bottle. So some people just came to loot. In fact, they stripped the Embassy of everything. But in the process, there were about 80 cars in the parking lot, they drained the gas tanks, and took gas in buckets, put it all over the Embassy, and set it on fire. It's not that an Embassy is particularly easy to burn, its masonry and brick, and there's not a lot of inflammable stuff, but if you use enough gasoline you can make anything burn. So it wasn't long before the whole Embassy was aflame. I was on the telephone with the Ambassador, and we agreed that he would stay where he was. He had radio contact with the vault. I had a radio in my house, and my wife sat beside the radio for the rest of the day, and transcribed everything that was said. It's the only record of what happened. I got in my car with my driver and made a loop around to avoid the crowd to get to the Foreign Ministry, which is very close to the Embassy, and luckily didn't run into any of this mob. I went straight up to the office of the Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry, and that was about 12:45 or 1:00, where I stayed until the whole thing was over. He and I together called various people, including the President, the President's chief military aide...

Q: President Zia.

KING: President Zia. President Zia, however, was in Rawalpindi, and he had taken to riding bicycles, and he was having a bicycle ride, and he was greeting his constituents. I think the non-arrival of the Army for the next five hours is very suspicious. You could even say, I think legitimately, that they were taken by surprise by the suddenness of this rush down the highway that they could have stopped if they'd had an hour or two warning. In any case, I think most people involved found it very suspicious that they didn't do any...

Q: It wasn't just the attack, it was also the mob getting to Rawalpindi. I mean, at least maybe they couldn't have stopped it, but they could have been alerted to what was happening.

KING: Yes, but I would imagine that was a matter of minutes, once the idea struck the crowd. Because you had all of these truck drivers, all of these people who were not really fully employed, hanging around, it's a big city. I can see that happening. The response was unsatisfactory, to say the least. Some people explain that they wanted to teach us a lesson about a few things. Others that they didn't want to get involved until they absolutely had to because that meant shooting Pakistanis, because that's the only way you can control a mob in Pakistan. You just have to kill people. Or that they didn't realize it was as bad as it was.

Anyway, from the Secretary General's balcony of his office, you could see this huge column of black smoke going up into the sky. I mean, there was no question how bad it was. And you could also see the road, and you could see truck after truck after truck of these yelling, chanting people. I guess we probably got about 10 or 15 thousand at the height of this thing. Finally, and this took some time, we got Army helicopters but by that time there was so much smoke — the idea was to land on the roof, one at a time, and take off with a load of people. They couldn't see where to land, and also — and this is legitimate — they weren't sure what the roof would hold. It's nothing I was an expert on. I had no idea either. My guess was that it wouldn't be a problem. In any case, they never landed, and I think, also, there was some concern that they were going to be shot at too. This situation

went on, and on, and on. I would talk to the Ambassador. He would talk to the people in the vault. We'd try to get somebody to do something. By that point the police were no use at all, you had to have regular Army to have any hope of saving people.

About 5:30 in the afternoon, still nothing had happened. The Army was on its way, we were being told then, for some time. There was a second group of people who were dependents, women and children, who got caught in the compound, and were surrounded by an angry mob, but about a dozen policemen with weapons surrounded them, and there was a stand-off that lasted all afternoon. The real danger, of course, was the people in the vault. We had all of our American, and FSN employees, in there, including the Time Magazine correspondent who'd been conducting an interview at that time. About 5:30 it got so bad in the vault from the heat — this building was all in flames — that the floor tiles started popping off. We knew we couldn't last much longer. So the Marines at that point were all inside the vault, and they had shotguns. This was discussed with the Ambassador, and they said, “We don't see any choice. We're going to have to come out. There's a ladder that goes to the roof. There's an escape hatch which is locked.” The people had gotten up on the roof is the reason we had not tried to get out, and they were firing weapons down the ventilation shaft. What they didn't do, and they could have done, is just pour some gasoline down the shaft and drop a match after it, and everybody would have been dead.

In any case, it looked grim. It looked very grim for the 150 people inside. So they unlocked the hatch, a Marine went up, and another behind him with a shotgun, poked his head out just in time to see the mob climbing down off the roof. They had gotten to the roof by taking a bicycle rack, upending it, and getting onto the first floor balcony, and with that getting to the second, and then to the third, and there were quite a crowd of people up there. But they were starting to climb down. At just that moment, the Army arrived. And by that time it was beginning to be dusk, and I'm sure they felt there'd be a lot less problem

with the Army shooting people in this situation, than in the full light of day. So they got out of there fast.

We were, of course, trying to watch other situations, and I was on the phone to Peshawar, Karachi, and to Lahore. We had a particular concern because we had hired a train. A whole crowd of people had gone down for Thanksgiving to Karachi, and as can be done there, they took a whole train. The train was somewhere between Islamabad and Karachi, and we figured if its ever stopped anywhere with this story about, they'd all be massacred. By that time the Secretary General had gone to see president Zia who had finally got back to Islamabad. I was with the Chief of Protocol, who is an Army General himself, trying to get hold of the railroad authorities to get that train to some place where it was safe. At this point, the Political Counselor came bursting into the room, and I had been so totally concentrated on what I was doing it didn't even occur to me where he'd come from until I smelled smoke. And then I realized that he'd been in the vault along with everybody else because I had no idea who was in there. So we together worked on this problem.

This went on as we tried to get ourselves organized, find out where the people were, and all during the afternoon too I was on the telephone with my wife finding out what was happening, according to the radio, to everybody in town. The school, where my two children were, was attacked — it was not a serious attack — and a retired Pakistani colonel just pulled out a gun and got the people out of the school. So by the time everything sort of settled down, the Army by then was there in large numbers. They were all over the city. At every street corner there was an Army vehicle.

The Ambassador and I, I guess it must have been by that time about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning, went to the Embassy to look at this situation. The Soviet Union had had a couple of cars around the Embassy, and people were trying to get into the compound, and see what they could find. And then we discovered that we didn't lose a single piece of paper, which was quite different from what happened in Iran. I remember we walked around the Embassy a couple of times with the GSO...

Q: The General Services Officer.

KING: The General Services Officer, and the building was still so hot you couldn't get close to it even though there were no more flames. The bricks were almost glowing. We had no communications, obviously. The next morning we moved into the AID building which was some blocks away. The Army was now in complete control of things. We made a telephone call to Washington, and left the receiver off the hook for the next three days, and ran up a $12,000 telephone bill, which we sent to the Pakistani government with our compliments. That was our only communications for three days. The decision was made in Washington, in which we could but concur, that dependents had to leave because we didn't know what this was going to lead to. The Department commandeered the PanAm around-the-world flight in New Delhi, threw off the passengers, and sent it to Islamabad. That happened the next morning. During the day we got ready for the plane's arrival. Thanksgiving dinner had been all prepared, so I said, “To hell with it. I don't care what has to be done, I'm going home and have Thanksgiving dinner.” So we had turkey, all the things that go with it, then I went back to work. Because of the reports that there was going to be more trouble, and a need to move quickly, we moved all dependents into four different houses in the city, where they slept on the floor that night. The plane was coming early in the morning. Then they were taken with armored personnel carriers to the Rawalpindi airport, and everybody got off with no problems.

And after that there were several scary situations, but basically we were never faced with that again. I mean, this kind of internal threat from mobs did not reoccur, although there was one bad day in which a mob of Shiites got on the loose in Islamabad, but their object was the government and not us.

It took us eight months to get dependents back, which seems like an awfully long time, because as I said, after that there was nothing further. But having spent all the money to move, you know the State Department is reluctant to send everybody back and then have it happen again. It doesn't look very good. We expected two or three months, but every

time the bureau would propose that dependents be allowed to go back, Secretary Vance would say, no. Everybody else agreed, but invariably he would say, “No, they're not going back.” And that's not the kind of thing you'd think the Secretary would have strong views on. He later resigned over the attempt to rescue the hostages, and that explains why. He knew this was coming. He didn't agree with it, and he was not going to have us in that situation again. He was absolutely correct.

Q: To put it in perspective, we were planning...our Embassy also in November of '79 in Tehran was seized by the Iranians, and we were planning to go in there on a rescue mission which would have been probably turned into a military operation, and would have enraged the Shiites again.

KING: We could very well have had a repetition in Pakistan, and I cannot speak very highly of the way that was handled. I was in charge at the time that mission took place. We got a message at 8:00 in the morning, saying there was a disturbed situation in the Middle East and we should take all necessary security precautions. So I called together the Country Team, and said, “Based on my experience in this business, if there's a disturbed condition in the Middle East, we've got something to do with it, and I don't think this telegram is being frank. I think there's something up. I just don't like the sound of it.” So I said, “I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to burn every piece of classified paper in this Embassy, right now. We're not going to run that risk again because I just don't trust this.” So we did. We burned every single piece of classified paper there was in the whole Embassy.

About three hours later, we got a telegram saying that the mission had failed, and that there might be bad scenes all over the Middle East. Well, having failed, I wasn't particularly concerned. If it had succeeded, we certainly would have. And that I feel was not right. I think you were taking risks with people's lives that were unnecessary, and I don't find that excusable. I think in situations like this, it usually turns out that the Department is told by the White House what they're going to do; and I suspect that's what happened in this

case. As I can figure out the chronology of this, I think the mission was over by that point anyway, when they'd sent the first telegram.

Q: The Iranian situation must have been on your plate the entire time you were there, wasn't it? I mean the rise in fundamentalism, and the concern about a spill-over. We already had one manifestation, but a complete spill-over into...

KING: It was, but from that point on, the Pakistani government was pretty concerned that they didn't have a Shiite problem of their own. So they were watching it pretty carefully. I can't say that internally I was concerned about what was going to happen, unless we did something. And that's precisely what happened. That was the dangerous thing, if we got ourselves involved in something. Well, we not only sent dependents home, we sent all non-essential personnel. But shortly after that, of course, the Soviet Union came into Afghanistan...

Q: This was in '79.

KING: That's right, and things turned around very fast. We needed the Pakistanis, the Pakistanis certainly needed us. And that began a series of talks that led to a massive AID program, and to supplying Pakistan with a great deal of war materiel, including two squadrons of F-16s which we would not have done under other circumstances. Again, I had three Ambassadors there, so, in between, I was in charge a lot of the time. So I was involved in a lot of these negotiations. We also had a lot of concern about the Pakistani nuclear program which occupied a lot of peoples' time. And then we had a major refugee problem as a result of the war in Afghanistan. And last, but not least, Pakistan then turned into the world's largest heroin producing country — all taking place in the same geographical area. I spent a great deal of my time as DCM as head of the narcotics committee. And none of those things really quieted down during my time there. It was a very active, and very interesting tour. I can't think of a better job in the Foreign Service than that one was.

Q: There are a whole number of things, but let's talk about relations between the constituent posts. You mentioned that we had three. Was Richard Post there at the same time? He talks with a certain amount — or maybe its just me — sort of bitterness about the fact that...he was in Karachi, and that he felt he was being kept on a very tight string by Ambassador Hummel in making contacts with opposition, which included Benazir Bhutto and her mother; and that every report he had to do had to go through Islamabad, rather than go out as most constituent posts do. Was there a problem with keeping a lid, or controlling constituent posts?

KING: Only in the case of Karachi, because that's where the opposition that counted, including Benazir Bhutto and her family and friends, were. I happen to agree with Hummel's policy. I think that's the way we should have handled it, and I supported it, and the post was very aware of it.

Q: These interviews are designed for somebody who is interested in how things work. What was the issue there, how one controls the post, and how did you see the issue?

KING: In this particular case...it's a situation you don't often run into, where you have a very large Consulate General, because it's the regional center, and it's the airline connection for everywhere. So various U.S. agencies have offices there, it's big. It's also, of course, one of the largest cities in the world, but it's not the capitol. The Embassy has got to keep control of the basic political process of relations between the U.S. and the host country. It can't be done in some subordinate post. The Ambassador, if he's got anything to do that's important, is managing this process. It can't be managed from somewhere else. It doesn't occur normally. You can think of a few places in the world where you'd have a situation like this, but the Ambassador is normally where all the political action is.

Q: What was your impression of President Zia? How did he relate to the United States? And our policy towards him?

KING: I think our policy was the correct one for the time. We had very large stakes in that part of the world, and it's now possible to look back on Afghanistan as not being quite as important as it looked then, but it looked very important then. Zia's movement towards democracy was far too slow for our tastes. But aside from that we had common interests on almost everything, except for the Pakistani nuclear program in which we had a very sharp disagreement on.

Q: What was the issue?

KING: The issue is that we said that they were developing nuclear weapons. They publicly and privately, to this day as far as I know, have denied this. Well, it's not true. They are, or they were. I don't know what they're doing right now. And even if we had wanted to ignore this, which we most certainly did not, the U.S. Congress wasn't going to ignore it. So their aid was always in danger over this issue. But in other areas, the refugees, and certainly Afghanistan, we had a really solid cooperation. General Zia was an extremely clever politician, a very solid military man, and a tireless worker. I've been called to see him at 1:00 in the morning, and after that somebody else is seeing him, and he's up early in the morning, into everything, knows everything that is going on. He generally made very sound decisions given what he had to work with. Pakistan is a very difficult country to govern. I don't know what our relations would have been like without Afghanistan because of the Embassy being burned, and the drugs, and the nuclear problem. The cooperation was reasonably good on drugs, but like everywhere else in the world, we're just kidding ourselves when we think we're going to stop narcotics in the United States by wiping them out somewhere else. In the first place you aren't going to wipe them out, that's just a myth. Most of the people who are involved in doing it know it isn't going to work, but domestically this is what we continue to do.

Q: I always feel that we're not in the best position when we're exporting...one of our major exports is tobacco, which unfortunately kills more people than this. But that's a different battle.

KING: Oh, yes, indeed.

Q: This was a sort of an odd time in relations with a subcontinent in that it was not a time of balancing off India and Pakistan, and where do we go because we were so focused on the Afghanistan...we're now back to the normal problem. Did India play much of a role, or were we just too busy...I'm talking about you, to worry too much about India.

KING: We worried very little about India. I think the only real concern is that India was going to start another war, or launch a pre-emptive strike against Pakistan's nuclear facilities. Either one of those things was quite possible. No, we had far too many concerns in Pakistan to think much about anything else.

Q: Was there much exchange back and forth between Islamabad and New Delhi?

KING: Not much.

Q: We really are talking about a time when these two were normally...there was a great balancing act, this was a whole different game.

KING: Yes. I think during this period India was not of terribly much concern to us. It goes up and down, of course, but Pakistan as you said, is now back to a sort of normal situation.

Q: Well, trying to reconstruct, on Christmas eve of 1979 — in the first place, were we getting reports that the Soviets might do something because of the situation in Afghanistan?

KING: Oh, I can't comment on that because I was on home leave. It happened just as I was about to return — not home leave, I was back seeing my wife, she was still evacuated. And Jimmy Carter's speech, I remember seeing when he cut off food aid to the Soviet Union — food sales — I saw in Dulles airport on my way back. So when I got there it had already happened, but there was no question at all in the Embassy about what it meant. That was very clear that U.S.-Pakistan relations were going to change immediately, and they did.

Q: The view from there, what did we see? Did we see this as a Soviet threat as a menace to everything? How did we see it from that vantage point?

KING: There are two aspects to this, of course. One is, what our policy was going to be toward the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. And the other was, is it going to have some effect beyond Afghanistan. There were some concerns about that, particularly as the refugee population built up in the northwest frontier; that this thing might spill over into that part of Pakistan; or might in some other way represent a threat to stability, because President Zia was obviously an impediment to what the Russians were doing, because it was very clear that he was the main support that the Afghanistan rebels had. I guess my feelings were that that was probably not too serious a threat, and that our concentration should be on just getting the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan.

Q: Was there sort of a feeling that this Afghanistan is going to be a lot harder for the Soviets than they think?

KING: I felt that way. Some people didn't. I thought they were going to get bogged down, and they did. But there was a difference of opinion on that.

Q: I don't want to overburden you but I wonder if you can talk a bit about...you were there during the change over from the Carter to the Reagan administration. How did this reflect itself in Pakistan on the work you were doing?

KING: Hardly at all. The Carter administration doesn't get as high marks as it deserves for some of the things it did. All the Reagan administration did, was just to continue the Carter policies. That's all, nothing more. You couldn't even have told that there was a change of administration for all the difference it made, because we had already decided on the policy which obviously was the correct one, and one which the Reagan administration would probably have adopted if the invasion had happened during their own time.

Q: Carter really took this Afghan business...I mean this was a song Road to Damascus practically, wasn't it?

KING: He reacted immediately, and I think in the right way, and he put a lot of effort into it in his administration. It got real high level attention all the time.

Q: Well, Barry, we agreed before we started this we were going to cut off this interview at this point. In 1984 you went to Brunei as Ambassador and we hope we can cover that at a later date.

KING: I'd be glad at a later date to cover Brunei.

Q: Okay. Thank you very much.

End of interview